How a War Would Affect Women.

William Le Queux, in the "Woman at Home."

During the talk of war and the preparations for war that have been going on for the past few months, we have heard nothing and read nothing except from the point of view of men. No thought has been given as to how a war would affect women. And yet a moment's reflection will reveal that women are the chief sufferers from war. They do not nowadays, it is true, don the war paint, carry the cognac keg, or shoulder the rifle and go forth to beat of drum to protect their own firesides. At all events, not in civilized countries. In Dahomey, two years ago, General Dodds, at the head of the French army, had to face the dusky female warriors of the sable monarch; but the trend of current events is not towards making women part of the vast fighting machine that must sooner or later come into conflict with the fighting machines of other countries, which are assuming such awe inspiring proportions, How soon that may come about it is impossible to say. It may be precipitated at any moment. Our own shores, which we have been taught to consider inviolable, might within a week swarm with an enemy. In his "Soldier's Pocket-book for Field Service, 1882," Lord Wolseley said: "Twenty-four hours of calm weather would now enable an enemy to throw ashore on our coasts an army, amply large enough to destroy any military force we could oppose to him, and to secure possession of London." Such an expression of opinion is not to be lightly viewed. It brings the prospects and horrors of war home to every heart.

In order to understand how war would affect women, it is necessary to realize how gravely possible it is that they may need protection from its terrors; and that the sense of security to which we have been educated has little real foundation. The opinion of Lord Wolseley is shared by other eminent military men. Lord Roberts, writing to me, said: "I entirely concur with you in thinking that it is most desirable to bring home to the British public in every possible way the dangers to which the nation is exposed." Our army is numerically weak; but the customary rejoinder to any such remark is, "But look at the navy!" It is a fine defensive force, without doubt; and the additions to be made will render it even more splendid and efficient. But it has a lot to do. It has to defend our commerce, and our food and coal supply. Once an enemy is able to evade the fleet, and land its armies upon our shores, the navy will be no help at all. With the enemy at our doors what should we do? As I have already pointed out on many occasions, our home defense scheme is a most elaborate paper problem; but as our forces have never been mobilized, its many glaring defects must remain unremedied until our highways echo to the tramp of a myriad footed enemy. With regard to some defects, there is no need to wait for any such disastrous contingency. We do not want to hear the roll of the foreign drum to realize that six thousand of our cavalrymen have no horses, and are therefore *hors de combat* before fighting commences. Nor is it necessary to wait until the enemy's machine guns are trained upon us to discover that our volunteers—our enthusiastic citizen soldier—the men "who brought the freeman's arms to aid the freeman's cause"—are without any transport service.

Grant then that war is possible, what would happen? An invasion, if it comes, will come swiftly, and without warning. Try to realize what would occur. The first intimation would be the strident cries of the newspaper boys with their "Extry speshuls." "Declaration of war against England." "Bombardment of our shores imminent." Imagine the feverish excitement in the streets, the consternation in the homes. The man would read the news with quickened pulse; a feeling of resentment would animate his whole being; he would want to run out and enrol himself under some flag; wave kisses to his family, shoulder his rifle, and march off to the beat of the drum to glory. There is much poetry and picturesqueness in war from this point of view, and the man on his first enlistment under the flag of his country realizes it all. It is not until he has fed on scanty rations, till he has marched himself footsore through dust and mud, till he lies for hours together in deep trenches knee-deep in water, that war becomes for him terrible, matter-of-fact prose.

But what of woman? There is no such excitement for her. Rich or poor, as the children gather round her, clinging to her skirts, her heart sinks within her. At best, what is she to do for food for them? How desolate the house will be without its head! How terrible the anxiety for news of him! How fearful the prospect should the enemy's march not be interrupted, and the horrors of war brought home to their very hearth! This is one aspect of how war affects women, and it is unnecessary to emphasize it. Every woman can realize its terrors and picture its anxieties; but who can describe the heartache of the solitary, desolate woman crooning over her infant—sick, maybe, both of them, for want of proper nourishment—wondering how it fares with him who is away, fighting for his country? Who can depict her terrible agitation as she looks each hour down the lists of the dead, or describe her utter desolation as she reads there the name she had for days, perhaps weeks, dreaded to see?

Many will be old enough to remember the fateful days of the Crimea, when the news reached us from time to time of the terrible sufferings of our soldiers. They will remember how, even in those homes where there had been no personal interest in the war, the keenest sorrow and sympathy was aroused. Every one was smitten with a desire to do something for our soldiers; and if they could do nothing else, they cut up cast linen and shredded it to make lint for the wounded.

Klondyke: Two Versions.

The most contradictory statements still come forth in regard to Klondyke. A Glasgow gentleman has received a letter from Klondyke, dated Feb. 27, from which the following is an extract: "If you know of any fools thinking of coming out to Alaska, tell them, for Heaven's sake, to remain at home The bulk of the talk as to the fortunes to be made is an advertisement of Klondyke companies and speculators. A friend has just gone back to the home country, being the only living one of six men who left in company for the goldfields. But a more striking instance is the departure homewards of two men out of a company of thirty-five who journeyed together. The thirty-three were buried at Klondyke. It is madness for young men to come out here."

On the other hand, Mr. Ogilvie, of the Dominion Survey Department, who in 1887 went to the district which now fascinates the attention of the world, is reported in an interview as follows: "There can be no dispute about the wealth. Though it is perfectly true that a great many Klondyke stories ought not to be swallowed except with a very large pinch of salt, there can be no doubt about the riches of the country. I have no hesitation in saying that to my own personal knowledge there is at least $100,000,000 worth of gold in sight; probably an estimate of twice that amount would be well within the mark. It is impossible to say what the country is not worth, but, if all indications are not purely accidental, I should put it at something like five hundred millions. I have had every opportunity of judging the mineral wealth of the country, for there is coal as well as gold, and its riches are tangible enough, I can assure you. It is, of course, impossible to generalize in a country 125,000 miles in area, by far the greater part of which is unexplored. This district contains about 7,000 linear miles of river, stream and gulch, nearly all more or less gold bearing, of which only about two hundred have been tested and developed. For all I know there may be halt a dozen Klondykes hidden away in the interior; on the other hand, there may not be one. No one ever will be able to speak with certainty until the country has been prospected."

The scientific expedition to the Klondyke goldfields, under Dr. Nordenskjold, will start from Gothenburg on the 23d instant.

A STORY OF A SHARK.—A thrilling shark story comes from Durban, where one of the local divers, named Batten, lately experienced a shock and a narrow escape. He had been engaged to recover a few heavy rails which had fallen over board between a steamer and the main wharf. The rails were found, and one had been hauled to the surface, when Batten perceived a young shark swimming around him. Having omitted to arm himself with the usual diver's knife, Batten moved to the boat and secured a weapon, intending to stab the shark if opportunity presented itself. On descending to the bottom again, however, Batten did not see the prowling monster, and proceeded to the rails which remained to be hoisted. He was about to attach the next rail, when to his surprise and alarm he noticed a huge shark, approximately sixteen feet long, lying right across the rails. The diver was in a quandary, because retreat from such a monster was exceedingly dangerous, whilst open hostilities with the knife would have been almost suicidal, not only on account of the size of the shark, but on account of its being literally sheathed with barnacles. Further, although the shark lay almost motionless, not a single rail could be touched without disturbing it. With a view to frightening the shark, Batten suddenly released all the air contained in his suit, which act caused a cloud of bubbles to rise from the escape valve. The shark did not budge, and when the suit was refilled, Batten made several faints as if to stab his enemy, but again without the desired effect. Then the monster made the first move. Steadily he rolled over on his back, showing a long white belly, and opened and shut an enormous mouth framed with rows of ivory white saw-like teeth. Batten wisely waited for no more, but dipped the escape valve, causing him to rise rapidly to the surface. He lost no time in scrambling up the ladder into the boat out of harm's way. A number of people spent the greater part of an afternoon in endeavoring to hook the shark; various kinds of baits were tried, but without success.—*South Africa.*

PROFESSOR ANDREE, who with two companions sailed away from the island of Spitzbergen, last summer in a balloon, to explore the unknown North, has been again recalled to the public mind by the news from the Klondike region that a letter from him has been brought to that part of the world by carrier pigeon, and is now on its way south.